

MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA DR GOPINATH KAVIRAJ

CENTENARY CELEBRATION

**7 September 1986
New Delhi**

KEY-NOTE ADDRESS

PROF. DR. GOVINDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA

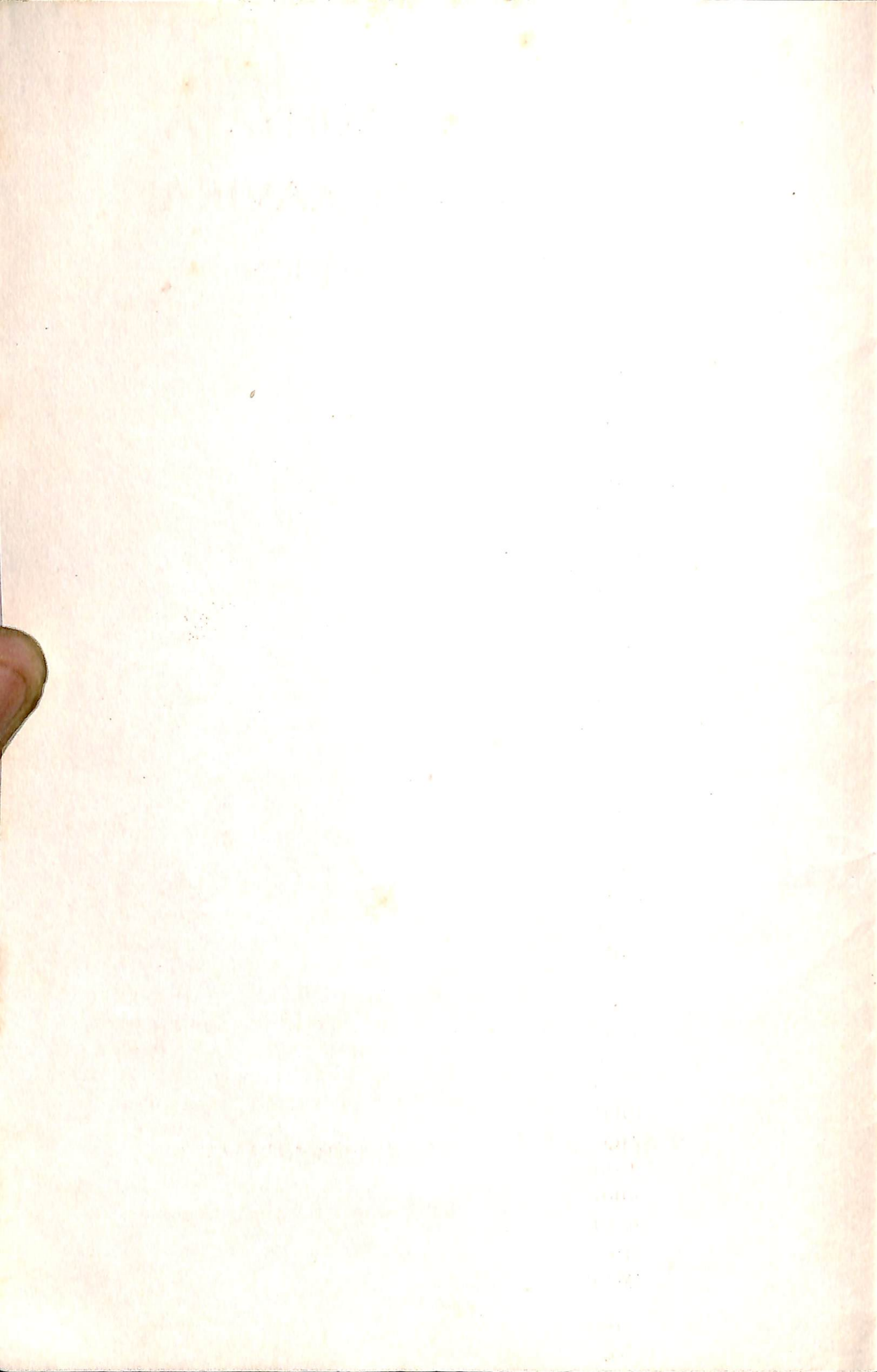
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Hon'ble Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel it a great privilege to have been called upon to deliver the key-note address on such a memorable occasion as this and to such an august gathering and I earnestly thank the organisers for having given me this opportunity to speak and offer my homage to my revered teacher of hallowed memory.

We have assembled here today to celebrate the birthday centenary of an illustrious son of India, in whom the Indian wisdom shone at its brightest in recent times. He passed into a legendary figure even in his life-time, not so much for his amazing scholarship in almost all the branches of Indian philosophy but for his wonderful insight in and original interpretation of our ancient heritage. To him it was all a knowledge by acquaintance and not by description alone because he happened to be so intimate with the spirit of Indian Culture and its tradition by his life-long pursuit for its realisation.

Life was to him not a bed of roses. Being a posthumous child he never had the good fortune of the fostering care of a father but was instead surrounded by his hostile relatives with only a widowed helpless mother to look after him. Whatever small fortune his father had left for him was also misappropriated and a kind maternal uncle gave shelter to this helpless child and his mother. Ill health also continuously dogged him and a victim of malaria, which was then raging in that part of Bengal from which he hailed, he was reduced almost to a physical wreck. After completing his school education at Dacca; he came down to Calcutta and sought the advice of his late father's intimate friend, the renowned philosopher Dr Brajendra Nath Seal about pursuing his college education in Calcutta. Considering the poor state of his health, Dr. Seal advised him to leave Bengal as the climate could never be congenial to him and proceed instead to far off Jaipur, where some of his highly placed Bengali friends, like Sansar Chandra Sen will be of help to him. Under his advice, the frail boy undertook the hazard of a lone journey to a distant and unknown place and later graduated from the Maharaja College, Jaipur. For his post-graduate studies, he came down to Varanasi and there was laid the foundation of his scholarly life under the loving care and inspiration of a great European scholar, Dr. Arthur Venis, who then happened to be the Principal of the Queen's College, where the young Gopinath

Kaviraj had got himself admitted. Dr. Venis was struck by the genius of his pupil and gave him initiation into epigraphical research work, which he took up assiduously. Later he was appointed the librarian of his college and this opened to him the entire treasure of Sanskrit learning. This votary of Sarasvati got his entrance into the precincts of the manuscript library which is significantly named Sarasvati Bhavan and started publishing various manuscripts as well as critical studies on them, which won him immediate recognition. He rose later to be the Principal of the college from which he retired in 1937, long before reaching the age of super-annuation, to devote himself entirely to a life of intense meditation.

Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj thus withdrew himself from the outer academic field to the inner sanctuary of self-realisation. The scholar now turned into a mystic, however, never lost his keen interest in intellectual pursuits, for he believed that the supreme secret lies hidden behind the veil of words. Only if the Word chooses to reveal its highest and inmost form, which is sometimes called as '*pasyanti*', the seeing or revealing word by the grammarians or as '*vyanjana*' the innate suggestive secret by the rhetoricians, the Reality can be truly known. Dr. Kaviraj, therefore, dedicated himself entirely to this single purpose of finding out the Truth and Reality behind the words or expressions of the ancient seers and plunged himself into the study of almost all the branches of Indian philosophy.

To Dr. Kaviraj, philosophical pursuit was not mere intellectual gymnastics to develop a robust mind nor the idle pastime of a speculative mind but a living way of attaining an insight into the true nature of things. Indian philosophy is, therefore, truly termed *darsana* and Dr. Kaviraj belonged to that tradition of Indian philosophers in every sense of the term. The one aim of all the Indian systems of philosophy, both heterodox and orthodox, has been the removal of misery and misery is always attributed to ignorance. The removal of misery is, therefore, solely dependent on the dawning of knowledge. *Tam eva viditva atimrtyum eti nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaya* is the age-old declaration of the Upanisads. Dr. Kaviraj was also seized with this problem of misery and this drove him to find the knowledge which could take him to the other shore beyond all darkness and misery. To him, the problem was not individual but cosmic. An individual, like the Buddha or Sankara, might have gone beyond all misery

through the illumination that dawned to them after intensive personal effort. But that illumination hardly touched the fringe of the cosmic gloom that still encircles this unhappy planet we inhabit. Man as such has remained as miserable as ever because he has neither that life-force nor that light which can completely sweep away all misery. In the memorable words of Sri Aurobindo the present human situation is :

Too little the strength that now with us is born
Too faint the light that steals through Nature's lids.

A sensitive soul like that of Dr. Kaviraj, with his spirit awakened, could never shut his eyes to the hard reality of universal misery all around him. Vyasa, in his commentary on the *Yoga-Sutra* of Patanjali, has tried to convey the nature of the illumined soul through the simile of the eye-cup (*aksipatra*). The touch of a gossamer or a silk thread may appear very soft and soothing to our skin but even a slight touch of it in the eye will immediately cause an unbearable burning sensation. What appears pleasant to our ordinary consciousness is, therefore, felt as agonizing to the sensitive mind of the illumine. To him the whole world is in flames, *Sarvam duhkham vivekinam*. Having himself ascended to the highest peak, he can now view the entire existence in its true nature; having gone beyond all misery himself he can now feel more intensely the misery that still engulfs all his fellow-beings. A verse quoted in the *Vyasabhasya* rightly describes the state of the *Prajna* or the illumined soul :

Prajna-prasadam aruhya asocyah socato janan/
bhumisthan iva sailasthah sarvan prajno' nupasyati//

When the sun of the highest and most perfect illumination (*prajna-paramita*) dawns, along with it blooms the lotus of compassion (*karuna-pundarika*) in the heart. As a great mystic poet, A.E. expresses it :

When the spirit wakens, it will not have less
Than the whole of life for its tenderness.

Dr. Kaviraj also in his tenderness took up the whole life and tried to find the solution to the problem of misery that surrounds it. So his philosophical approach was not individualistic but universal, not idealistic but pragmatic, not unrelated to life but wholly concerned with it.

To ascertain how the truths embodied in the ancient scriptures and philosophies of India were actually lived and practised as well as realised, Dr. Kaviraj turned to the saints and mystics of his time. In the process, he discovered his Guru in the person of Swami Visuddhananda Saraswati of Varanasi, a Yogi of uncommon supernatural powers, who could practically demonstrate how everything in the world is derived from the one single source, viz. the Sun of the Spirit. What he had learnt at the feet of another great master, Sivaramakinkara Yogatrayananda, who had revealed the secrets of the scriptures to him, was now verified through his initiation in Yoga by Swami Visuddhananda.

Dr. Kaviraj thus became a denizen of both the domains of philosophy as well as of religion. He, therefore, has remained an enigmatic character to many. His philosophical contributions are suspect to many rationalists and hard-core philosophers as they feel it to be tinged with mysticism, while his simple child-like faith was bewildering even to many earnest religious souls. The wonderful make-up of this man was really baffling and he was indeed a unique phenomenon in that he combined in his single person the two rare and opposite virtues of critical insight and uncritical acceptance. In this, he seemed to represent the true ideal of Indian philosophy, which bases itself on the unquestioned acceptance of Sruti and then applies all the critical acumen to find and establish its rational justification. He will never dismiss anything as unreal or impossible because the bedrock of his personality was established upon this firm faith in the existence of the universal reality, which is true *astikyabodha*. Reality can reveal itself anywhere and at any time, under any condition whatsoever. So nothing is impossible or incredible in this world and to dismiss anything summarily will be a great folly, according to him. He always kept himself open, accepted *in toto*, whatever came to him as an evidence of real experience and thereafter he would proceed to verify the truth thereof. This explains his ready acceptance of everything, which appeared to many as verging on childish credulity and all the more amazing and inconceivable in the case of a man of such extra-ordinary intelligence as him.

But this acceptance was not unquestioned or uncritical as is evident from his dissatisfaction with almost all the systems of philosophy that he studied. He thus combined in himself the

rare and opposite virtues of *pranipata* and *pariprasna*, which the Lord in the Gita prescribes as the *sine qua non* for obtaining true knowledge. Prompted by the one single aim of finding a satisfactory solution to the problem of human misery, Dr. Kaviraj explored all the possible fields of human thought and found almost all of them unsatisfying because they offered only partial solutions and those too for the individual alone. The problem of misery on the cosmic level remained untouched and the world as a whole was as much engulfed in misery as ever, if not more.

His own analysis revealed to him that all our misery can be traced to one single cause, viz. change. The wheel of change revolves in its six-fold inexorable movement. The first step in the movement is birth, which gives us our existence (*jayate, asti*) but that existence grows (*vardhate*). The seed sprouts forth and goes on growing to its full stature of a huge tree with all its fruits and flowers, branches and leaves (*puspitan phalitah candratarakadivat pratimanditah*). But this is only one arc of the change, the change towards growth or development and as soon as it reaches its zenith, the other arc of it starts functioning, the change towards decay (*viparinamate, apaksiyate, nasyati*). The entire existence is being swept off by this tide of time or is being whirled up and down by the constantly revolving wheel of time. The term, *Samsara* literally signifies this state of our existence, to which we generally close our eyes and remain blissfully ignorant. Only the awakened or the enlightened, like the Buddha or Sankara, become conscious of this movement and try to rouse others from their sleep so that they may be awake to the real state of things.

To be aware of the change, according to many, like the Buddha, is to have transcended it. To others, like Sankara, the change is only apparent and unreal, a magic wrought to hide the reality. Still others, like Kapila, owning that the change is real, try to extricate themselves from its running stream by standing aloof on the banks all alone, which they call *Kaivalya* or aloneness. To Dr. Kaviraj all these appeared admirable as heroic efforts on the part of the individual to go beyond change. But except for that particular individual in whom the illumination (*prajna*) dawned, the process of change remained as it is, the world remained unredeemed as the flow of time continued uninterrupted. It is said that the Buddha could not enter into the portals of

Nirvana because the loud wailings of suffering humanity drew him back and he is said to have taken the vow that so long as there was a single soul plunged in misery he would not enter into Nirvana. This is also a frank admission of the fact that the problem of misery remains unsolved even to this day, even though the Buddha had his illumination and supreme realisation.

Dr. Kaviraj, therefore, could not feel satisfied with the previous realisations of saints and seers because the question of universal misery always gnawed at his heart. He tried to grapple with the problem of Time on the basis of different systems of philosophy and this was to him, till his last days, of the most absorbing interest. What first struck him was the keen analysis by the Yoga system of Patanjali of the process of change (*parinama*) and also its wonderful insight into the nature of Time (*Kala*). Later on, the Kashmir Saiva system of philosophy very much attracted his attention because, in it, the process of change is neither explained away as unreal nor shunned though owned as real but taken as a manifestation of the power of the Supreme Reality itself. This was very close to his own view of the matter. Dr. Kaviraj, therefore, came to be known more as an exponent of Yoga and Tantra than of other systems of philosophy in which also he had an equal mastery. Another reason for his inclination towards these two systems was that they were related to life, delineated a practical way to realisation of the truths embodied in them, while the other systems confined themselves only to intellectual speculations.

The keen eye of Dr. Kaviraj found out that though much has been made of *vivekajnana* or the discriminative knowledge in the Yoga system, through which the self or the soul attains liberation by separating itself from Prakrti or Matter, the other great and essential attainment of *vivekajnana* has been completely ignored or bypassed. This latter one is attained only through a knowledge of the point of time or moment (*Ksana*) and the sequence or series thereof (*Ksanatatkramasamyamad vivekajam jnanam*). Only this knowledge bestows omniscience and omnipotence (*Sarvajnatvam Sarvadhishatrtvam ca*), because the entire existence hangs on the string of moments. This string or series of moments is a creation of our mind and is therefore unreal. Time thus has no existence whatsoever, the only reality being the moment (*Ksanastu vastupatitah Kalastu buddhinir-*

manah). We suffer because we take time to be real. If we could take our stand only upon the point of time i.e. the moment, we could have realised that the entire universe experiences all its change only in a single moment (*ekasmin eva ksane sarvām jagat parināmī anubhavati*) and not through a series of moments.

This can be truly grasped only by a close examination of the process of change. The first change called *dharmaparināma* that occurs is that of the substance (*dharmīn*), into its innumerable forms (*dharma*). As for instance, the earth lends itself to the formation of so many earthen jars. But we become aware of it or take notice of it only when it makes itself manifest at the present time. From the unmanifest future something comes to the present time to be hurriedly buried once again in the past. The change through these three moments of time is known as *lakṣanaparināma*, with which we are all conversant, and which has the characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of past, present and future stamped on them. The past and the future are both covered in darkness, and beyond our comprehension. Unknown and unmanifest to us are both the beginning and the end, only for a brief while in the middle we know the manifest. The Bhāgavad Gītā expresses it beautifully when it says :

*Avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamādhyāni bhārata/
Avyaktānidhanānyeva tatra ka parīdevāna//*

But why does a present become a thing of the past? Because the present is also seized with a ceaseless change. This is known as the third or last of the changes viz. *avasthāparināma*. The present is also passing through different states or phases (*avasthā*) from moment to moment, of which we are blissfully ignorant. From the very moment it makes itself manifest from the womb of the unmanifest it is again moving towards the unmanifest. We are, therefore, completely in the dark about the first change (*parināma*) viz. *dharmaparināma* as well as about the last viz. *avasthāparināma*. We have only knowledge of the middle change viz. *lakṣanaparināma* alone, where we witness for a brief moment the appearance of something from the dark womb of the non-appeared (*anagata*) to vanish again into the disappeared (*atita*). But object or the product is not generated anew through the causal process but is eternally existent (*sat*), according to the system of Yoga. The so-called generation and dissolution (*utpatti* and *dhvamsa*) are nothing but appearance and disappearance

(*avirbhava* and *tirobhava*) in the flow of time. If we could extend our vision of the present moment to the Eternal Now then we would have found all existence intact in its full bloom for ever.

Dr. Kaviraj, therefore, concentrated on the concept of moment or *Ksana*, which could only be realised by the contraction of time, the cessation of the series, the absorption of the entire process within itself. He found a corroboration of this in the concept of *Kalasamkarsini*, the power that draws or devours up time, as propounded in Kashmir Saivism and also in the Vaisnava concept of the eternal Brindaban. It is portrayed that in that Brindaban, Krishna is eternally young (*nityam Kisora eva sah*) and so are all his friends. The Bhagavata narrates the story of Brahma's delusion (*brahmanamohana lila*), when he stole away all the cows and cowherds that had been brought to the field of Gokula by Krishna. But even after he had taken all of them away, to his amazement he found the same cows grazing in the field as before and also the cowherds attending them. Dr. Kaviraj would explain with his luminous vision that Brahma's creation is in time and when he took the cows and cowherds away he naturally thought that it was all finished. But he never knew that Krishna's creation is beyond time and eternal and so cannot be taken away even by Brahma himself because he also happened to be created by that Supreme, now embodied as Krishna.

Dr. Kaviraj therefore, believed that as there is a creation in time so also there is a timeless creation. The former is ephemeral, transient, full of sorrow and suffering while the latter is eternal, abiding and always full of supreme delight. Many systems of philosophy have only one aim viz. of getting out of this creation in time and thereby to attain the peace of absolute silence or void. To them timeless creation is a contradiction in terms because creation means change and change is always linked up with time. With the cessation of time, creation must also cease. This view is quite logical and conforms to our common-sense apprehension of the world as a series of changes wrought by time. But as discussed earlier, if we could stop the series and at the same time take our stand on the point of time i.e. the moment, a new world would have opened before our eyes, which is not the creation of Maya but of Sakti, the innate creative power of the supreme Siva and therefore eternal.

Dr. Kaviraj was convinced that the woes of the world could never cease without the transformation of the *mayik* illusory world into a *Sakta* world or the real world of divine power. But how this transformation is to be effected? Here Dr. Kaviraj turns into a scientist and takes recourse to *Suryavijnana* or the science of the Sun. We all know that the Sun is the ordainer of time and it consumes or burns everything by its power of change. But as Dr. Kaviraj used to point out that even a child is aware of the consuming power of the Sun, for he may playfully use a magnifying glass and by focussing the rays of the Sun on a piece of paper through it, get it completely burnt. But even the most learned among men is not aware of the constructing power of the Sun because the Sun is the source of all creation too, as the Vedas affirm, *Surya atma jagatah tasthusas ca*, it is the self or the soul of the animate as well as the inanimate. The Sun is the combination of the two basic elements that underlie all creation. In the language of the Vedas as well as the Tantras, they are Agni and Soma. The ancient seers affirmed that the world is constituted of and sustained by these two principles, *agnisomiyam idam jagat*, Agni is the principle that burns, consumes and transforms, while Soma is that which sustains, nourishes and makes things grow. Agni is thus the *bhokta*, the enjoyer or the consumer while Soma is the *bhogya*, the enjoyable, the consumed. In the Bhagavadgita also these two principles have been referred to as the *Vaisvanara*, which is stationed in every human body as the consuming power and the *rasa*, the sustaining sap or essence which makes the crops or our food grow. The Upanisad also teaches the functioning of these two principles at different levels down to the human body through the *Pancagnividya*. Soma, the sustaining essence, is thus like the oil that keeps the flame burning but the flame or Agni slowly dries up the oil in the process of burning and ultimately brings about its own self-extinction.

The problem is, therefore, to strike a balance between the two. There must be achieved an equal proportion of both these elements so that the consuming power may not exceed the sustaining power. This coalescence of the two principles is found in Surya alone because as Agni it dries up everything through its scorching rays and again as Soma it pours down the ambrosia of life from the heavens in the form of the rains to sustain the earth. The great poet Kalidasa also refers to this

phenomena when he says : *Sahasragunam utsrastum adatte hi rasam ravih*. The Yogins have also discovered the functioning of these two principles in every human body through the two *nadis*, called *ida* and *pingala* and have tried to achieve a balance between these two alternate and opposite currents by taking recourse to the middle *nadi*, called *Susumna*, literally the current of supreme happiness or delight and the Vedas call the ray of the Sun as derived from *susumna* (*susumnah suryarasmih*).

The whole concern of Dr Kaviraj was to make this supreme happiness available to everyone by ushering in a world, sustained not by the opposing principles of *Agni* and *Soma* but by the single unifying principle of *Surya*. We should not, however, mistake it for the physical sun, though the same principle of coalescence is illustrated by that too on the physical level. The *Suryavijnana* that he pursued and tried to explore was that supreme science which lies hidden behind the Sun of the Spirit. Even modern science is in search of such a knowledge which will take it beyond the sphere of determinism in which it is bogged and cannot extricate itself therefrom to taste real freedom. Sir James Jeans in his "Physics and Philosophy" voices this anguish as well as the fond hope of modern scientists when he says :

"Now these waves of knowledge exhibit complete determinism; as they roll on, they show us knowledge growing out of knowledge and uncertainty following uncertainty according to a strict causal law. But this tells us nothing we do not already know. If we had found new knowledge appearing, not out of previous knowledge but spontaneously and of its own accord, we should have come upon something very startling and of profound philosophical significance."

Another eminent scientist, Eddington frankly owns the utter futility of our search for reality through the physical world, in these memorable words :

"The supposed approach through the physical world leads only into the cycle of physics, where we run round and round like a kitten chasing its tail and never reach the world-stuff at all Most of our common impressions of substance, world-wide instants and so on, have turned out to be illusory and the externality of the world might be equally untrustworthy."

The world is thus in travail and humanity at large is in search

of a new knowledge and Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj was one of its last explorers in recent times. In him we find a kindred spirit of Sri Aurobindo, a lone wayfarer of the same hazardous path, a restless soul in search of a new consciousness that will completely transform a world in time into a world of eternity. Like Sri Aurobindo he felt that

All here must learn to obey a higher law,
Our body's cells must hold the immortal's flame.

There was no question of leaving the world and the body to enjoy immortality in some distant heaven through a flight from the alone to the Alone. Because he knew, again like Sri Aurobindo, that

Else would the spirit reach alone its source
Leaving a half-saved world to its dubious fate,
Nature would ever labour unredeemed;
Our earth would ever spin unhelped in space,
And this immense creation's purpose fail
Till at last the frustrate universe sank undone.

Dr. Kaviraj therefore affirms that "knowingly or unknowingly man wants to pierce the darkness and seeks to attain eternal life by transcending time. The inmost desire of every man is to attain this immortality." He also adds that "nobody has been able till this day to attain real manhood and so none has been able to reach the path of true fulfilment. The world still moves in the path of fragmentary knowledge. The undivided whole is nowhere in view because in that other path of complete fulfilment oneness cannot be established by the exclusion of many. That is why up to this day time has not come to an end. Until the full reality reveals itself in the world the hope for the fulfilment of all individuals is a mere chimera."

We may call all this as mere nonsense or dismiss it as illogical and absurd but a man was born in this holy land of ours a hundred years back from this day who dreamt of such a thing which alone, he believed, would lift the entire world from its present state of miserable existence. A lone dreamer like Sri Aurobindo who knew that though none would understand or believe in what he was propounding and would rather scoff at him, yet

'In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth,
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep,
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.'

To such a heroic soul and a humanist to the core we offer the deepest homage of our hearts, who was at once a savant and a saint, *śrotriya* as well as *brahmanistha*, an ideal teacher (*ācārya*), a daring philosopher, a supreme scientist who has left for posterity the supreme wealth of his ennobling thoughts. It is for the Government of India and the U.G.C. to preserve and propagate this priceless treasure.

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